

TEN YEARS SINCE 9/11
OUR COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE
(Pakistan's Perspective)

1. On 11 Sep 2001, the world entered a new era. Many of the old definitions, concepts and assumptions altered. We all went through a new experience of fighting terrorism and learnt our lessons. Ten years have made us wiser. We have all achieved varying degree of success but at a great human and economic cost. It has cost the world upward of 200,000 dead, 4 trillion dollars and compromise on civil liberties. We faced dilemmas like security versus liberty, security versus development and limits of hard (kinetic) power versus great potential of soft power. We have learnt how to balance these in a new paradigm. We have learnt that it is easy to make war but far more difficult to achieve peace. We have known the limits of hard power and strength and opportunities afforded by soft power. We have seen the importance of political approach vis - a - vis limitations of military solutions. Perhaps, we have re-learnt the age old lesson of subordinating the military to political strategy. We have better understood the importance of strategic patience. Now we can better appreciate the need for comprehensive approach i.e. clear, hold, build and transfer. We have also learnt that it is easier to destroy but far more difficult and time consuming to build. All of us made mistakes in the process of learning a new paradigm of fighting terrorism. However, understanding the consequences has made us wiser. This is our collective experience. Having learnt the lessons, it is time for humility and understanding. We have entered a new phase of transition and reconciliation aimed at achieving peace. Given our collective experience and wisdom, let us forget about past difference of opinions and be wiser on achieving a better peace. It is the ultimate objective and more difficult to achieve.

2. Let us now zoom in and have a closer look at last two years. How has the situation changed? OBL is dead and so are the number 3 and number 4 of AQ – Atiya, the operational commander for Afghanistan / Pakistan is dead and Younis Mauretani, the commander for external operations (US , West) has been arrested. AQ is on the

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run and perhaps disintegrating. Two years ago we were talking about surge. Today, we are talking of transition and reconciliation. Then, emphasis was on military element, today, the emphasis is rightly on political strategy to achieve a better peace. Then we were talking upto 2014 but, today, it is ISAF / US presence in Afghanistan beyond 2014. The public support on continued commitment in Afghanistan is less today, both in US and Europe. World economy is in recession which will further reduce available resources to fight terrorism. We have recently seen the phenomenon of the Arab Spring. The old order has altered in some important countries. Its initiation and motivation was internal. It was more about justice and human dignity and less about democracy. We have yet to see how it settles down but we know it will have consequences for world peace regardless.

3. Put together, the paradigm has shifted in Afghanistan: Today, the focus is on transition and reconciliation which is complex, challenging, not very predictable but necessary. The outcome should lead to a more balanced and peaceful Afghanistan. A failure would have consequences for the region and the world, but, most significantly, for Pakistan. The need of the hour is a more collaborative and imaginative leadership. A collaborative, collective and not a unilateral approach, led and owned by Afghan people is the right way forward

4. What is the way forward in Afghanistan? The end condition that we seek in Afghanistan is enduring peace based on stable environment. It is important to define peace and stability in Afghan context which may well be less than perfect. Here, stability is the key which is essentially a function of balance. Balance in turn, is achieved by identifying and reconciling the extremes. It implies that all factions in Afghanistan should have a stake in the Peace process. In Afghan context, it implies an all inclusive approach which is open to all Afghans. We are not seeking an ideal solution. There will be compromises. This, however, does not mean giving up principles. We must, however, remember that peace built on stability alone will be enduring.

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5. Having identified the end objective i.e. peace based on stability, it is important to identify considerations which draw the basic parameters:-

- a. Afghanistan is not a monolithic society. There are numerous centres of gravity. This makes the balance of the society fragile and delicately poised. This also makes the management of society and governance a huge challenge.
- b. Like any country, Afghan geography, culture and history are constants in the short term. Fragmented geography has resulted in tribal culture and the history of Afghanistan tells us that there has hardly ever been a strong central government. Accommodating and balancing competing tribal and sub-regional interests is fundamental to controlling Afghanistan.
- c. The pre-requisites for a strong federal government are; the Centre is 'giving' to the regions, it has strong Armed Forces and a strong federal structure. As of today, the concept of strong Central Government in Afghanistan defies the three constants of geography, culture and history in the absence or lack of essential pre-requisites.
- d. In essence, the basic parameters for Afghanistan to be stable and peaceful are drawn by the three constants i.e. geography, culture and history. The success within these parameters will depend on the assumption of how strong the ANA, the federal structure and the economy will be in 2014. Ignoring this basic paradigm could create risks which will be difficult to cover given the constraints of resources and time. The assumptions should not be taken for granted.
- e. Manoeuvre space is dependent on available time and resources. Time is short and resources limited. Idealism will have to operate within the confines of hard ground realities. If we can fuse the two, an all embracing solution will not be far. This cannot be achieved without keeping a sharp focus on history, geography and culture of Afghanistan. These factors

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frame the construct of the mindset, expectations and aspirations of people of Afghanistan.

- f. The Afghan people should consider themselves, as part of the process. It should be Afghan owned and led.
- g. Identification of politico-military Centre of Gravity in Afghanistan is very important. As of today, there are multiple centres of gravity. We need to reduce these to as few as possible, in the first phase i.e. strategic shaping of the environment.
- h. Three end objectives identified by Secretary Clinton in Feb 2010 i.e. reduction in violence, Taliban breaking away from AQ and accepting the Afghan constitution should be seen as such in the operating strategy. End Objectives should not be mixed up with pre-conditions
- i. How should success be measured in terms of progress towards the end condition? It is not how many people are killed or captured and how much area is controlled but in terms of the following:-
 - (1) Are policy options opening or getting restricted? Can alternatives be developed, if required by the political leadership?
 - (2) Are we gaining or losing the public support.
 - (3) Is the military strategy creating necessary conditions to help political strategy (military strategy is not an end in itself)?
 - (4) Are the constraints of time and resources being met?
- j. We should never lose sight of the fact that this war was not about winning spaces or destruction. US entered Afghanistan to defeat the ideology of Al-Qaeda that threatened World peace.

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k. For any move forward, a new strategic framework should be agreed upon and an 'operating strategy' formulated to implement it. Strategic environment has to be shaped accordingly.

6. The new strategic framework for Afghanistan is about transition upto 2014 and hand over to a "capable" Afghan Government and the ANA. The presence of ISAF and the US beyond 2014 to help 'ENABLE' Afghan Government in development and , if required, counter terrorism has to be weighed correctly in terms of implications for it to remain a positive for the end conditions. It should ideally help reconcile and correctly balance the competing interests in a complex equation. It should provide space and flexibility and not restrict it. 'SUSTAINABILITY' , both in short and long term, and in the context of political, military and economic cost 'SHOULD BE THE KEY CONSIDERATION'. For this the political will of US and Europe will be the most important assumption. We can't afford to go wrong in its correct identification as well as sustaining it.

7. Given the strategic framework which has more or less evolved, what should be the guidelines for the operating strategy? Perhaps the most important is that peace in Afghanistan should always be judged in relative terms and in relation to Afghan environment. It is important that what can be achieved and sustained, with the given resources and time as well as within the constraints of geography, culture and history, should form the basis of operating strategy. It should be launched in the correct direction in a manner that local dynamics help maintain the momentum. If we manage to achieve it, it will have a snow balling effect and positive results would multiply. It is equally important that the process is set in motion now. Achieving less which is sustainable is more important than attempting more that is not sustainable.

8. Given above guidelines, it has to be determined whether to reconcile or not? And if yes, then with whom, a select group or all? Once it has been determined by Afghanistan and ISAF, Pakistan is prepared to help. However, the extent of this help should be correctly appreciated. We can facilitate but not guarantee. Ultimately it will remain Afghan responsibility.

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9. To operationalize the concept we have to agree on what is to be done, who is to do it, what is the sequencing, what are the timelines? Essentially, the operating strategy should give a road map. Shaping of the environment should be to help implement the strategic framework and operating strategy.

10. In the ultimate analysis, if people of Afghanistan and their coming generations view the US and Coalition as friends, the war would be won. If they think otherwise, it would be considered to have been lost. Final judgment will be passed by the people of Afghanistan. Their ownership and support is, therefore, vital and ultimate.

11. As of today, all of us broadly agree on the concept of the way forward in Afghanistan. The challenge now is how to operationalize it and decide on tactics. Having accomplished a consensus on the concept it will be unfortunate if we fail due to operational and tactical differences. It is critical that we are not distracted by bilateral issues which can at best be termed as irritants.

12. Like everyone else, Pakistan also confronted a new form of threat (terrorism). We have also learnt by doing and might have made mistakes but our intent has always been to defeat terrorism in all its forms. However, like all other countries we also have constraints.

13. Geography and history are perhaps the biggest constraints. Total length of Border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is approx 2611 Kilometres. It is roughly comparable in length to the US - Mexico border (3100 km) or the entire US East Coast from Maine to Florida (2800 km). In Europe, similar comparison can be drawn to France's border with Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium and Switzerland combined (2750 km). It is mountainous area with mountains as high as 24000 feet. It is further complicated by history. There are divided tribes on either side with strong tribal and ethnic linkages. Historically, this was formalised by what is called "Easement Rights". This essentially means that people both sides of Afghan - Pakistan border could cross informally without a visa or passport. This informal crossing is upto 100,000 daily. You can't stop history in one day.

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14. Economy can be called the ultimate constraint. Today, our growth rate is merely 2.5%. A struggling economy was hit by the worst floods in Pakistan's history in 2010. Damage to infrastructure was approximately ten Billion, 132 Sq Kms (1/5 of Pakistan) along Indus River, the most populated and fertile land, was affected. Twenty one million people were directly hit. Army had to deploy 70,000 troops to help people.(Figure 1). Unfortunately, today, we are in the grip of yet another bad flood which has destroyed properties and crops (including the most vital cotton crop) in complete Southern Pakistan. Our ability to support military operations but more significantly to support the 'build' phase has been severely degraded. In some ways, we are fixed in the 'hold' phase, having successfully completed the 'clear' phase. We can not succeed unless we complete the cycle and are able to 'transfer' the responsibility to civil administration.

15. There are limits to Pakistan Army's capacity. We have a 500,000 strong Army. Total deployment on the Western Border is approximately 150,000 and an additional 80,000 is on the Eastern Border. Being the largest contributors in US Peacekeeping we have 10,000 troops in current UN missions. The deployment totals upto 230,000. Given the Teeth To Tail ratio, the need for rotation and training, only 30% of a force is normally

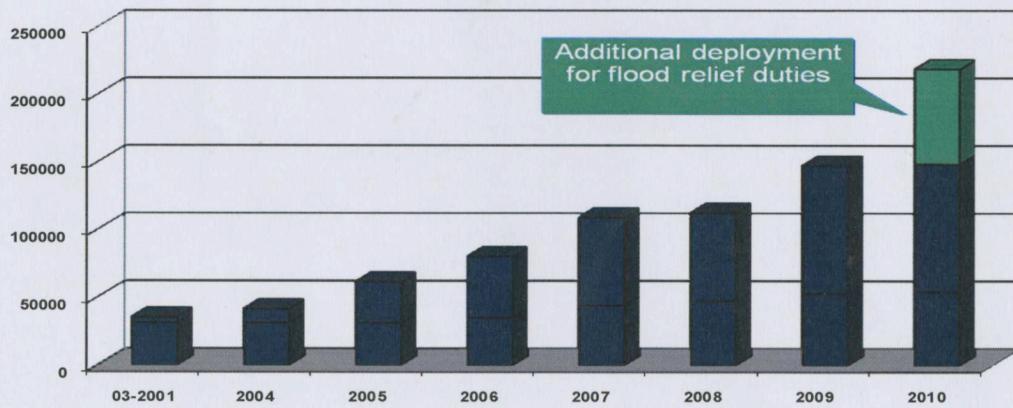


Figure 1 - Employment Of Troops during Floods

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deployable but we have more than 40% of the Army deployed. Besides economic affordability, the Army is stretched in deployment. To maintain the present deployment, our soldier serves in the operational area for 30 months as compared to 6 months of most ISAF soldiers. Even when he is not in the operational area, he could not be considered to be in peace location (like coming home for ISAF soldiers) but remains engaged in internal security duties. Army is also stretched in budgetary terms as well. Total Army budget is approximately US \$ 2.5 Billion. Maintenance expenditure per soldier for the entire army is merely US \$ 6000 per year which is lowest in the world. Within this budget we have to maintain an Army of 500,000 and also support operations of a deployed force of approximately 150,000 on the western Border. We are mindful that our country cannot afford more. Therefore, over a period of time (Ten years) the budget has reduced from 4.5 % to 3 % of GDP; as percentage of total budget it has declined from 37 % to 14 %. Given the rate of inflation and Dollar/Pakistan Currency parity it is essentially a declining budget. Our argument is not to seek military aid but to improve our economy so that we can sustain the war against terrorism.

16. Besides physical constraints, we have restraints because we are fighting in our own country and pub opinion is critical. Nation building is the most important criteria in our case.

17. Given the constraints, parameters for Pakistan on war on terrorism are clearly drawn. We can't be doing everything at the same time. It has to be sequenced in a well thought out campaign plan, both military and political; various competing interests have to be accommodated and reconciled to keep public support intact; Soft power is more important than hard power; the ultimate objective is reconciliation. Therefore, considerations to this end can not be ignored; Short term objectives are important but not at the cost of long term interests. The two have to be reconciled. Ultimately, we have to achieve peace and stability in Pakistan as well. In our pursuit of stability and peace we have to maintain a correct balance – an imbalance / instability in Pakistan is in no one's interest.

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18. Inspite of all the constraints we have tried to do our best. We have 150,000 troops deployed. Graph will show that we went into a surge in 2007 which has been sustained for five years. Our deployment equals total deployment of 48 countries of ISAF. (Figure 2).

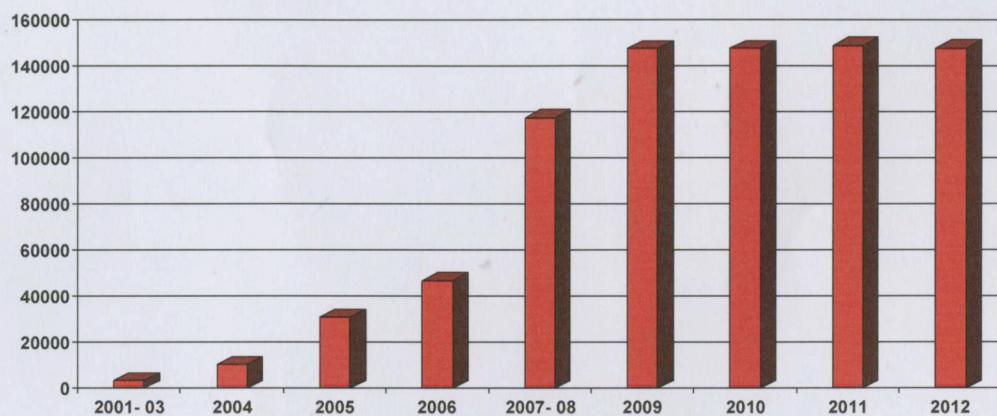


Figure 2 - Employment of Troops

19. This surge is also visible in number of operations. So far, 241 Major Operations (Brigade size and above) and 649 smaller operations (Battalion size and below) have been conducted. This effort has its own cost. Over 13,000 soldiers have died and wounded. (Figure 3).

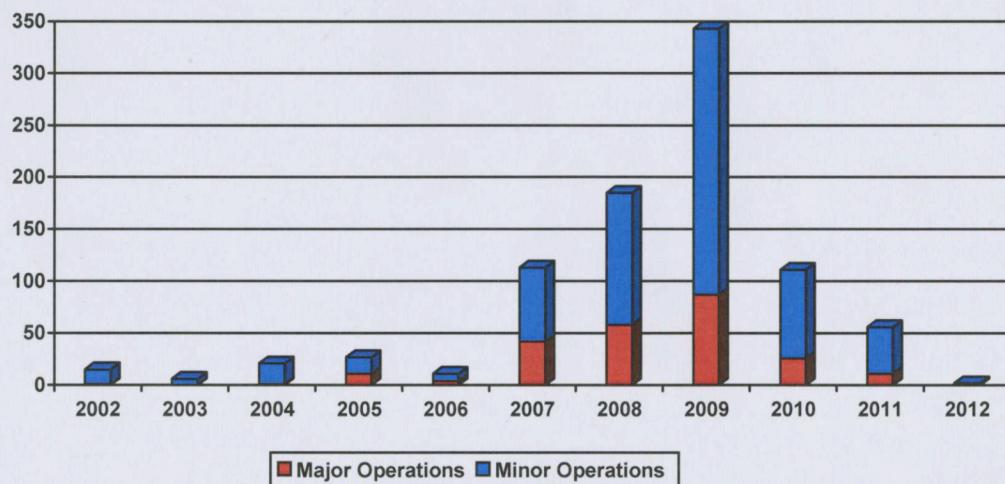


Figure 3 - Performance of Pakistan Army

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20. Military operations have a blow back in rest of the country. Since 2002, 277 suicide attacks have taken place. Almost 98% were from 2007-12. It has resulted in 11,000 dead and wounded. Overall Pakistan has suffered more than 40,000 casualties in the fight against terrorism. (Figure 4)

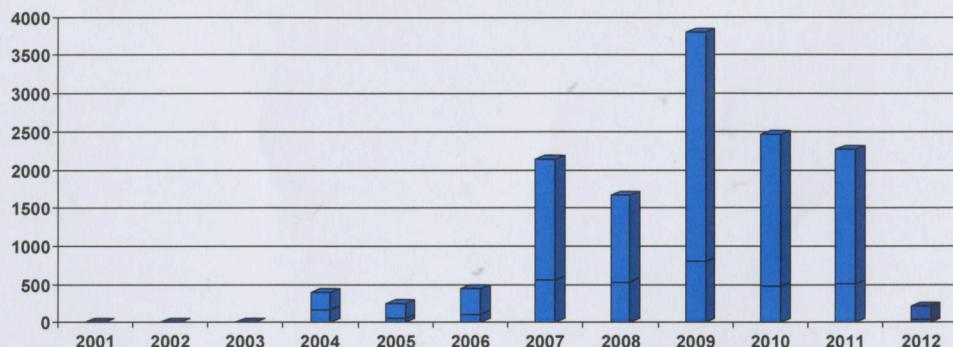


Figure 4 - Suicide Attacks

21. War on terror has its social and recurring cost. Rehabilitating the wounded and taking care of the families of the dead will not end in short term. Where soldiers have suffered psychologically, families are no exception as they have also been targeted. Children of the troops participating in the operations have been specifically targeted. It is not only the soldier but his entire family which experiences this stress.

22. In the war on terror, for every ten soldiers one officer has died which speaks of the motivation and leadership. We have also lost nine General Officers, highest ranking being a three star.

23. We should never forget or overlook the resolve of the people of Pakistan who have faced worst kind of terrorism in last five years but still their resolve has not been shaken which is the bed rock of Army's motivation as well.

24. Our intelligence agencies which remain a subject of worst criticism have suffered 250 dead and wounded. Three of the five regional Headquarters of ISI have been targeted by Vehicle borne suicide bombers. With very limited resources their contribution to war on terror can be counted amongst the best.

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25. One example of Swat is sufficient to illustrate our performance. Swat with an area that of Belgium, with the same kind of forest but for the 15,000 feet high mountain, was practically lost to Taliban. Army conducted a four Divisions size operation to establish the writ of the Government. It resulted in displacement of over 2 Million people. Within a short time of four months, not only the military operation was completed but all 2 Million displaced people went home. Today, they are "smiling" again. This has been witnessed by most important military commanders of ISAF as well as diplomats. Do we have a comparable example?



26. Pakistan sees its security not in Afghan context alone but in broader regional context. With a stable and peaceful Afghanistan on our West we also seek peace and stability on our Eastern Border with India. Confrontation with India is not in Pakistan's interest. It is not realistic as well as practical. Given the difference in size, economy and defence expenditures, Pakistan can not afford it. It will be only at the cost of development which ultimately creates more serious national security issues.

27. India is our most important neighbour. It is an emerging power with potential to influence global politics. Peaceful coexistence between Pakistan and India is of great benefit to Pakistan. Pakistan can not afford to be in a perpetual state of confrontation with India. Problems of terrorism, poverty, underdevelopment and poor state of vast human resources of both the nations, can not be solved through existing state of relationship. It must improve. Pakistan is very well aware of its limited military potential, essentially defensive in nature. An armed conflict with India is, therefore, not a preferred option for Pakistan. Unfortunately, there are unresolved issues, a history of conflict and an Indian military capability which is Pakistan specific. We are committed to resolving outstanding issues with India and live in peace with dignity. BIG POWER is about SIZE but GREAT POWER is about CONDUCT. We wish India to be a GREAT POWER

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CONCLUSION

28. The end condition is a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. Stability should be seen in Afghan context. Constants of history, geography and culture should not be violated. The constants draw basic parameters. Four elements of operationalization – what is to be done, who is suppose to do what, sequencing and timelines. To be realistic we should hope for the best (positive outcome of reconciliation) but be prepared for the worst (failure) --- the plan should have branches and sequels. Basis of strategy should be what is doable and sustainable. Strategic direction has to be correct. Internal dynamics of Afghanistan must be supportive of the solution.

29. In spite of all the constraints and regardless of the fact that our efforts are not fully recognized, we have done our best and, in some ways beyond our capacity, to fight terrorism. Be assured that fighting extremism and terrorism is a vital national interest of Pakistan.

30. It is worthwhile to remember that in spite of success against terrorism world has paid a huge cost, "there can be no return to the innocence of September 10th 2001 – and sadly, no end to the vigilance" (*The Economist*, September 3rd, 2011). In our fight against terrorism we shall remain mindful that at the end of the day our children should live in a better world.

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